THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

ol. IV. October 21, 1938 Tishri 26, 5699 No. 12

Editorials:

AMERICA IN THE PRESENT CRISIS
AMERICAN JEWRY'S RESPONSIBILITY

A Message from Dr. Kaplan

Religion and the Jewish Liberal

By BEN ZION BOKSER

Ends and Means

By NATHAN BARACK

Proceedings of the Reconstructionist Summer Institute

(Continued)

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EDITORS

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By IRA EISENSTEIN

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EDITORIALS

America in the Present Crisis

THE *Yomim Noraim* this year were in all literalness "days of fear." For during the course of them, mankind passed through one of the most dangerous crises of modern history. The crisis is gone—for the present at least. But with its easement, we become more painfully aware of the confusion of mind which prevailed throughout our country as to the role America ought to play on the international scene. We were unprepared for the hour of decision, unprepared as to policy and procedure. With the fate of civilization hanging in the balance before our eyes, we had no notion as to how we ought act. Almost as painful as the crisis itself were our own hesitations and the tumult of debate among us. Experience has taught us again that policies must be prepared before they are needed, that the time to discuss programs is not the moment of emergency.

The program for America, the RECONSTRUCTIONIST believes, ought be as follows:

First, America must stay out of any and all European wars. France and England may not enjoy the privilege of abstinence; America does.

It is not selfishness, insularism or an awareness of our privileged position which impels this advocacy of a resolute neutrality. Other, more vital considerations urge us in the same direction. We know in advance of any war, that it will, in all likelihood, solve no problems. The probabilities of an equitable peace after a war are slight. A passionate victor is scarcely ever reasonable. The odds are then that one explosion will only lay the ground for another. America's influence for a sane settlement of international difficulties will be the greater, not the less, if it abstains from war. The belligerents, even the victors, will need America after a struggle. We shall be in all the better a position to lead the world to its senses if our own are not inflamed by participation, and if our resources are still intact.

But most of all, America must stay at peace in the next war, because so America serves democracy best. It is argued that the democratic countries must stand together against the authoritarian. We pass over the issue of the genuineness of the democracies of France and England, or the question as to whether the next war will be fought for political ideas or for imperialistic interests. The fact still remains that any democracy that enters a war to save democracy may very well emerge from that war as a totalitarian state.

America's great opportunity for service to democracy consists not in risking it in another crusade to make the world safe, but in showing that democracy can be made to work. Our task is that of building a free, equitable society on our own soil.

Second, it is apparent that, though we may maintain a legal neutrality in any international explosion, we cannot be neutral in our sympathies. Our loyalties will inevitably be on the side of those countries which are more peaceful in their intentions, more tolerant of minorities, more democratic in their political structure and spirit. At the very time that we insist on America's holding aloof from military action, we must reckon with the fact that we shall be driven to support the democracies as against the dictatorships.

For that reason, we urge that a workable neutrality policy be set now, one which shall, without embroiling us in war, still enable us to be of help to those powers which represent values akin to our own. We must decide now the extent to which we can give of our financial and material resources and still keep the peace. We must prepare now to deal with the economic dislocation which will follow inevitably on any war abroad. We must determine now how to resist the waves of war prosperity, and their pull toward embroilment.

These are admittedly delicate and difficult tasks, to help the powers to which we are sympathetic, without precipitating war with their opponents; to help them without becoming so involved financially with them that we may be compelled to step in to save them and our investments from collapse; to plan against both war prosperity and war depression, as factors operating toward embroilment.

Delicate and difficult though they be, such procedures are the only method for the attainment of a realistic neutrality policy.

But neutrality it must be in the end. War is not inevitable. But should it come, America must stay out of it. It may well become our destiny to serve as the last stronghold of democracy and civilization. Our greatest service to humanity is to fulfil that destiny.

American Jewry's Responsibility

THE immediate results of the false peace of Munich indicate the precariousness of the state of democracy in those parts of Europe where, until recently, its continued existence was taken for granted. Even more uncertain is the future of the Jews in Europe. The Poles' occupation of Teschen was celebrated by pogroms on Jews. Hitler's forthcoming domination of the Balkans and possibly of Poland will complete the ruin of the Jewish population in those regions. Pressed by economic necessity and urged on by the fierce and chauvinistic nationalism of a defeated country, Czechoslovakia, too, seems about to follow the dictates of the author of *Mein Kampf.* The volte-face of Mussolini in his treatment of the Jews in a land in which there has admittedly been no Jewish problem is revealing of what may be expected in any land that falls under the influence of an unholy alliance with Nazism. The disregard of international morality by Chamberlain in handing over the only democracy in central Europe to the Nazi wolves must rouse earnest apprehension of a similar Munich procedure in regard to Palestine. And even in what is left of the western democracies, Jews face an increasing barrage of ever bolder and more self-assured Nazi propaganda.

This leaves the Jews of America as almost the only considerable section of Jewry that enjoys sufficient freedom, security and prosperity to enable it to carry on those activities that are indispensible to the maintenance of Jewish life. It is not merely a question of raising funds for the settlement and placement of refugees. Nor is it merely the problem of strengthening the Jewish settlements in Palestine and exerting whatever diplomatic influence we can bring to bear in the interest

of Zionism. American Jewry must assume and must maintain the cultural and spiritual hegemony in Jewish life. It must become aware that it can no longer depend on masses of new immigrants from Europe to infuse into its veins the blood corpuscles of a vital Jewish culture such as existed among the compact masses of eastern Jewry a generation ago; that, on the contrary, Jews everywhere look to America not merely for assistance and guidance, but for the faith, courage and inspiration to carry on as Jews. For the Jewish center of Russia, once the mainstay of all that was vital in Jewish life, both of the old order and of the new, has been completely cut off from contact with the rest of Jewry and is in danger of utter dissolution. Polish Jewry is economically impoverished, spiritually divided, and psychologically defeated. The Palestinian *yishuv* is standing with its back to the wall, fighting bravely, but its future cannot be determined by its own valiant stand nor by the merits of its case, but is largely dependent on political and diplomatic considerations that have weight with people like Chamberlain.

This situation in which world Jewry finds itself gives to the program of Jewish life that THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST stands for an immediate urgency of which even its friends and supporters are hardly aware enough. The establishment in America of a vigorously functioning Jewish civilization, that shall not merely conserve values inherited from the Jewish past but shall stimulate the necessary creative power of the Jewish people to face its future is a task that cannot wait. Before the war, the Jewish scholar who later died the death of a martyr, Israel Friedlander, used to say that it was the function of Western Jewry, with its gift for organization and efficiency, to create the machinery of Jewish life, but that Eastern Jewry must provide the fuel. That situation no longer obtains. Eastern Jewry is no longer in a position to provide the motivating power and drive of Jewish life. Unless American Jewry can generate enough Jewish spirit to carry forward the Jewish historic movement, all our communal machinery, our associations, institutions and organizations, will be so much idle machinery rusting away. Reconstructionism is interested both in machinery and fuel, in structure and spirit. For those who grasp its philosophy, its advancement is not merely a worthy cause, but in the light of present conditions, a solemn responsibility.

A Message From Doctor Kaplan*

FOR once I feel restive here in Jerusalem and would like to be back in America, in spite of the sense of spiritual adjustment which I am experiencing here as I never experienced it before. I would have given anything to be with you, and to tackle together with you the various problems indicated in the editorial of the July first issue of the RECONSTRUCTIONIST. Everyone of the conferences of a similar character, in which I participated, marks a milestone in my personal development. I am indebted to them for much of the clarification in my own mind of the issues at stake in the Jewish struggle for existence, and for much of the persistence with which I insist upon those issues as in need of being fought out, if the Jewish people is to survive.

Your coming together this time of your own accord, without my even having suggested it, is an indication that you feel just as strongly as I do about all those matters which are so essential to Jewish life, and which nevertheless seem to be nobody's business. Not even the organizations and institutions which supposedly exist for the purpose of

* This message, sent from Jerusalem on August 10th, was addressed to the participants in the Reconstructionist Institute and was read to them on Friday evening, September 2nd.

perpetuating Judaism seem to be aware that the future of Judaism in America depends upon the frank and forthright facing of questions of belief and attitude with regard to the authority of tradition, the status of the Jewish people as a distinct group, the bringing up of Jewish religion to the point where one could live by it and die for it. Be assured that in formulating these problems and in seriously striving to solve them, you are bringing to life what lies dormant in the innermost depths of the Jewish being, even though the surface of Jewish existence betrays but little evidence of anything significant being beneath; it is so agitated today by the violence of a world become insanely cruel.

But if I cannot actively participate in your sessions, I can at least make one or two suggestions. In the first place, I would ask you not to allow yourselves to be diverted from the main objective of our movement, which is to give content, intellectual, emotional and volitional, to the daily living of Jewish life, to fill the void which actually exists, in spite of the continual harping on our glorious past. We need a Jewish encyclopedia that would mean to us Jews what Diderot's encyclopedia meant for the French people. We need tracts that would interpret reality, God, human affairs, etc., from the standpoint of man's need to find life worth living, despite the recrudescence of savagery and the new sadistic forms in which it manifests itself. We must articulate passionately our faith in the possibilities of goodness, intelligence, democracy and universal peace, so that if the nations will destroy us, those who will come after them—for they too will be destroyed—will be grateful to us for the legacy we shall have left them.

You well know the condition on which a proselyte is to be admitted to the Jewish faith. After being told all that he must expect affiliation to cost him, he must answer: "Nevertheless." I feel that it is the primary task of our movement to justify that "nevertheless", not so much to proselytes as to Jews themselves. In all fairness, what, besides the precarious hold we have on a few hundred thousand dunams of land here, can we point to as constituting sufficient reason for saying "Nevertheless"? So long as that is the case, all the community organization and efficiency in the world cannot save us from extinction absolute and final.

It seems to me that it would be a mistake to involve ourselves, especially at the present time, in the practical task of community organization. American Jewry is a generation too late for community organization on the old lines and a generation too early for organization on new lines. Our job is to lay down these new lines. By that I mean that it is the function of the Reconstructionist school of thought to give to American Jewry a mind and a will. So long as being a Jew will not represent being vitally interested in specific cultural content of a Jewish character, so long as there are no definite Jewish values that make life worth living, it is absolutely futile to expect Jews to organize for any other purpose than for defense against anti-Semitism and for philanthropy, and, with the organization of community chests, perhaps not even for the latter.

It is a mistake to believe that, by getting Jews to organize, you will arouse in them an appetite for enough Jewish values extant to enable the mere effort to organize community life to resuscitate them. That is no longer possible, because practically all the vitality is gone out of those values that the Jews had brought with them from the old world. You know the story about the late agronomist Aronson and the few grains of wild wheat he discovered in Palestine. By grafting that wheat on the cultivated wheat which had degenerated as a result of cultivation (i.e., had become meagre in food value and dependent upon abundance of rain) he expected to make it possible for the wheat to grow in territories that are almost arid. Something analogous to that is what we must do for the deteriorated Jewish values; we must restore their vitality by grafting on them some of the

original creative forces that operate and are likely to operate in Palestine. Concretely speaking, this means that we must first of all create a literature of Jewish thought and aspiration by reinterpreting in terms of universal human needs whatever good is latent in our tradition, and articulate our attitude toward the burning problems of contemporary civilization, such as democracy, creative intelligence, human dignity, etc.

I am especially afraid of your being led astray by those of our adherents whom you refer to in the editorial on the Summer Institute as saying: "Your philosophy is good, but what are you going to do about it?" Those are well-wishers, who talk that way; they are not yet your adherents. They understand, perhaps, what you are saying, but they do not really believe it. If they actually did, they would not be asking you, "What are *you* going to do about it?", but they would be asking themselves, "What are *we* going to do about it?" It is the old distinction between the *rasha* and the *haham*. But I would not hold it against them that they talk that way. It simply shows that we ourselves have not written enough, created enough, developed enough of vital Jewish values to make them ask what they could do to make those values part of themselves and of all in whom they are interested. It is apparent, then, that the primary task to which we must dedicate ourselves is the creation of Jewish values, by which I mean great thoughts, great music, great pictures, great architecture. There are the problems of class struggle, nationalism, education, and others of similarly large scope. There are some among us who have much to say on these matters, or would have much to say, if we were prepared to make the necessary sacrifices involved in making them our chief concern. But I am sure there are many others in whom lie dormant great powers that might be applied to the task of rendering Jewish life creative and inherently worth while. It behooves us to do all in our power to win them for our cause.

The conference ought to concentrate on the formulation of a number of themes and theses for reflective and creative writing. Rabbis ought to receive copies of these themes with suggestions as to the spirit in which they ought to be developed; and the laity ought to be circularized to demand from their rabbis enlightenment on these matters. Prizes ought to be established for the best works, and their publication assured.

There is one type of organizational effort which might fall within the scope of our movement. I refer to the establishment, in one of the Jewish labor sections of the city, of a Labor Synagogue. Such an institution is necessary, in order to come to grips at first hand with the problems that mark the lives of the Jewish workers. It is only by coming in direct contact with men and women of that type that we can be in a position to know their needs, and what should be done to meet them. Otherwise, much of our talk about social justice is bound to remain academic.

There is another piece of organizational effort that might be undertaken, and that ought not to involve much expenditure of energy. It is essential to bring about some *modus vivendi* between the Conservative synagogues, which tend to become synagogue centers, and the community centers, which are usually supported by the local federations. My reason for suggesting our taking a hand in this rivalry between those two types of institutions is that the rivalry is itself the result of something we have been preaching, namely, the inclusion within Jewish life of other activities besides religious We are likely to be charged with having brought about mischief in advocating this more comprehensive conception of Jewish life unless we do all we can to eliminate whatever undesirable by-products result from the embodiment of our ideas.

You realize, of course, that the kind of organizational effort I have been deprecating is of the extravert type. But I would, by all means, urge you to engage in organization of the introvert type, i.e., to set up the necessary machinery to bring

about the objectives I stated at the beginning of the letter. It might be advisable to organize as the Friends of the Reconstructionist, and to have the various study groups in the different cities identify themselves by that name. We need considerable resources to develop the magazine and to offer prizes and fellowships that would elicit the necessary creativity. How to secure such resources should be discussed at the Institute.

My best wishes for the heartening success of the Institute. I hope that you will all go forth from it stimulated to increase manifold your efforts in behalf of Reconstructionism.

Religion and the Jewish Liberal*

By Ben Zion Bokser

THE term "liberal" has come to assume political connotations. It is being applied to people who cannot decide between competing social or political alternatives and who are thus reduced to passivity and inaction in the crucial problems of world affairs. In the present discussion the term is used in its more native sense, as descriptive of a type of mind which is emancipated from old dogmas and popular prejudices, a mind that pursues its deliberation in the spirit of free inquiry. What is and what ought to be the attitude of the Jewish liberal toward religion?

If we gauge the Jewish scene correctly, Jewish liberals are, on the whole, indifferent, if not antagonistic, to all religion. Current events, particularly the crisis in German Jewry, have convinced many of them that a Jew cannot ultimately escape his destiny as a Jew. But the Jewish responsibilities which these men are prepared to accept are generally based on a conception of Jewish life which does not include religion. They may, for example, be loyal to the causes of Jewish self-defense, philanthropy, Zionism and even Jewish education. Religion, however, they regard as extraneous, as something that perhaps may be entitled to deference as a venerable tradition but which can no longer play a major role in the life of the modern Jew.

The reasons for this decline in religious interest are not far to seek. The acids of modernity distilled by a culture based on the spirit of the Enlightenment have eaten into the texture of traditional religion and rendered many of its practices and assumptions obsolete. The parties of social and political dissent, too, under the inspiration of Marxian anti-clericalism, have waged relentless war against religion as one of the bulwarks of the old economic order. All religion was, of course, affected by these processes. But the Jewish religion was harder hit because of the minority status of the Jew, which renders all his institutions more vulnerable to an unfriendly environment. The Jewish religion was also more vulnerable because it was only yesterday that the Jew emerged from medievalism and he has not as yet had the opportunity to reconstruct his tradition in a form that would make it compatible with modern culture.

It would be rather serious if Jews gave up their religion. Religion may be an extraneous factor in other civilizations, but it is part of the ethnic culture of the Jewish people. The scenes, heroes and episodes dramatized in the Jewish religion are the very stuff of the Jewish past as a whole. Indeed, religion is the acknowledged contribution of the Jewish people to civilization. For the Jew to repudiate religion is not only to repudiate his own past; it is to repudiate that which gives him dignity and respect in the family of the world's national groups. The Jew, moreover, especially at this time, is

*Address delivered at the Sabbath Services of the Reconstructionist Summer Institute, September 3, 1938.

in desperate need of those resources of the spirit which religion makes available for all who live by it—morale, a sense of life's worthwhileness, the faith that the clouds now darkening the world will finally scatter and that a brighter morrow is yet destined for mankind. If liberalism is essentially the spirit of free inquiry, a true liberal ought not discard all this without a careful evaluation of the meaning of religion and its function in the life of man and society.

What is the essence of religion? The professors have grappled with this problem at great length, but their answers have not always been illuminating. Dr. Whitehead, for example, defines religion as "What a man does with his solitariness." To Dr. Reinach it is "the sum of scruples which impede the free exercise of our faculties." Mr. Havelock Ellis is even more obscure when he suggests, "Now and again we must draw a deep breath of relief—and that is religion." Can anyone recognize religion as we know it from these definitions? Religion as we know it includes ethical imperatives, theological beliefs and ritual practices. A definition, if it is to be adequate, will have to reckon with each of these elements. It will have to point to the reality that underlies them all as well as to indicate their relationship to each other.

Perhaps the most helpful statement of religion is contained in the famous conversation of Hillel and the would-be proselyte. When the candidate for proselytism wanted a brief, all-inclusive summation of Judaism which he could memorize while standing on one foot, the sage suggested the golden rule, "What is hateful unto you, do not unto others." Hillel's statement is of course equivalent to a definition of religion in terms of moral value. As Mathew Arnold put it, religion is "morality touched with emotion."

The pre-occupation of traditional Judaism with moral values is certainly pronounced. The Ten Commandments, large sections of the Book of Exodus, the Book of Numbers, the Book of Deuternomy, as well as the entire prophetic literature, all speak of the quest for moral values. How does religion arrive at these values? There are the interpreters who have always insisted that these values were God-given, but what these interpreters mean is that at some specific point in time there occurred a supernatural event and God literally spoke His will to mankind. The Bible is supposed to be the medium recording this will for posterity and all time to come. All that we understand by liberalism as a way of thinking rebels, of course, against the assumption of supernaturalism. An interpretation of religion that is to command our respect will have to be formulated in terms which involve no dichotomies between the natural and the supernatural.

In a certain sense the values of the moral life are developed through the same process as the values of practical life—experience. When a child burns his finger he will learn to avoid the flame. Similarly the experience of oppression will teach men the virtue of freedom; the experience of the inevitability of death will teach men the virtue of resignation; the experience of violence and hatred and tyranny will teach them the value of peace, good-will and justice. As Ernst Toller put it in a recent address, "Only he who has lost his freedom can appreciate it." It is interesting that, in most instances, traditional religious texts, in enunciating a particular religious value, actually add the context of historic experience in which it is rooted. The Sabbath, most of the ameliorative legislation affecting the slave and the laborer, the injunctions to practice charity and love to the stranger, indeed all the advanced moral imperatives of Biblical literature are generally related to the suffering of the Jews under Egyptian bondage.

But what is it that makes man react in this fashion to experience? What is it that enables man to transmute his experience into value and forge out of it the goals for improved patterns of personal and group life? It is certainly not the effort to achieve pleasure and avoid

pain. In the pursuit of these values men have been willing to sacrifice their very lives; and they have often persisted in their loyalty to those values when to betray them would have spelled all the worldly glories conceivable. Marxism points to class interest as the ultimate source of all loyalties; but it is significant that some of the best fighters for revolutionary values have come from the social classes that revolt was destined to destroy.

The rationale for moral values religion finds in the character of the universe, including man, who is part of it. The religious interpretation of the world and man is contained in the doctrine of the divine. Fluctuating from the naive animism of primitive religion to the sophisticated pantheism of maturer religions, the belief in God has always meant the assertion that the basic reality behind the universe respects human personality and is working for the eventual triumph of those values for which man at his best has always striven. God's presence, however, is not limited to nature. He pervades man as well. This is what the Bible means when it describes man as having been formed in God's image. In the quest for moral values, man is, in other words, merely expressing a tendency that is part of his endowment as man. The man who feels the stir of a moral impulse seeking to break through into moral deeds, is no different than the artist who feels the stir of the art within him, seeking to break through in rhythm, song or plastic representation. The urge to self-fulfillment is operative in both cases.

According to Hillel's definition, religion begins with loyalty to moral values. But Hillel also added in his lesson to the famous would-be proselyte, "and the rest is commentary—go forth and study it." Religion also includes, in other words, a fabric of certain derivitives. We have dealt in part with one of those derivatives—theology. There is another derivative that is no less important—ritual.

What is the origin of that complex of practices that make up the rituals of every religion? There are those who would once again introduce the doctrine of supernaturalism. These rituals are the God-given aids to salvation. The explanation is obviously inadequate for anyone who refuses to recognize a supernatural order which occasionally can break through to interrupt the normal flow of the natural order.

Once again we shall find it more fruitful to examine the working of human nature. People tend to complete any deep emotion through some overt act. Kicking the table in anger or an affectionate embrace are emotional climaxes releasing deep pent-up tensions. The nature of the overt act through which a particular emotion will reach its climax depends on a number of factors, but it is generally derived from the context of the initial experience. Social custom will finally create a groove through which emotional energy will flow to find the same climax repeatedly with different members of the same group. These overt acts will then be more than the completion of an experience. They will become the symbols dramatizing and reinforcing the particular emotions through which they were born. All this is very well illustrated in the role of flowers, anniversaries and mementos in family life. It is precisely in the same manner that this process operates in the field of religion.

Whenever the loyalty to moral values reaches the level of emotional fervor it will give rise to certain overt acts, like festival celebrations, which will finally become recognized as the socially ordered symbols for communion with and consecration to those values. Passover, for example, is more than a commemoration of the emergence of Israel from Egyptian bondage. It has become the commemoration of Israel's quest for freedom all through the ages as well as a rallying call for the defense of freedom in our own day for the Jew and for all mankind.

Ritual is, of course, not confined to the adherents of a technically acknowledged religious ideology. The clenched fist in a Communist demonstration is illustrative of the use of ritual in a so-

called secular community. Communism has indeed been described as a militant religion by such men as Reinhold Niebuhr and Professor Herbert Schneide. It represents moral values. It has a ritual. What it does not have is the religious metaphysic, the ethical characterization of man and nature, by which religion rationalizes man's quest for the good life.

Religion begins with the quest for values but it is so confident in the significance of these values that it links them to the cosmic purpose. Is this religious metaphysic intellectually justified? What right does religion have to interpret the world in ethical terms? How about the problem of evil—all the negative forces in the world and in man, the source of all life's tragedy? Judaism has never denied the reality of evil. Does not the Bible admit that "the impulses of man's heart are evil from his very youth"? It asserts, however, that life is worth while in spite of it, that the affirmative forces predominate and that man, cooperating with these forces, will yet establish God's kingdom on earth. As the liturgy put it, *ani vahu hoshia no,* "I and He deliver." Man, in cooperation with God, can achieve the world's deliverance.

This assertion of Judaism cannot be proven. Those who accept do so ultimately as an act of faith. But what alternative do we have? Shall we say that the world is morally indifferent? Shall we say with Mr. Krutch that "living is merely a physiological process with only a physiological meaning"? Shall we interpret the cosmos as Bertrand Russel does, as "relentless matter rolling on its relentless way"? What proof is there for that? Man as well as the cosmos that gave him birth present a complex of many varied and often conflicting qualities so that any judgment of the whole will invariably involve assumptions, hypotheses, faith. If the religious person seems baffled by the experiences of evil, the atheist must be baffled, in no smaller measure, by life's triumphant experiences, the symphonies of Beethoven, the speculations of Einstein, the prophetic cry for justice, the martyrdom of the saints of all ages. Atheism, too, must ultimately be taken on faith.

The only significant differences between the two faiths, the religious and the irreligious, is in their respective implications for human life. What happens when we deny a relation between human values and the cosmic purpose? Futility. The only logic of atheism is despair and death. It is interesting to note that Marxists in their quest to create a rationale for their social ideals have developed the doctrine of the inevitability of the revolution, the doctrine, in other words, that history itself is fighting for the triumph of their cause. This doctrine is ultimately no more than an assumption, an article of faith. (The anathema originally prenounced by the official Communist party on such men as Max Eastman and Sidney Hook was derived, in part, from the fact that these men have rejected this doctrine as an assumption, a faith beyond scientific demonstration.) But how can history have a meaning unless it be derived from the cosmos as whole?

Judged by the tests of pragmatism, the faith of religion appears fully justified. The person who assumes it and builds his life on it is sustained by a great power. When he is weak and falters, it buoys him up. When he suffers frustration, it gives him morale to carry on. When the forces of darkness threaten his ideals, it gives him the courage to resist and the confidence that darkness will eventually recede and justice emerge triumphant. These experiences are real, as any reality that we experience in the world. There are no intellectual compulsives to help us determine the choice between religion and irreligion. But the ultimate choice is between death and life, between a curse and a blessing. As the Bible puts it, ". . . I have set before you life and death, a blessing and a curse; and ye shall choose life. . . ."—Det. 30:19.

The religious process is universal in the sense that it has its roots in human nature. But it is a process which becomes differentiated with the social medium in

which it is enacted, just as a ray of light is differentiated by the medium through which it is refracted. Thus a society in which the population is stratified into rigidly fixed social levels will generally emphasize respect for those of higher birth and caste. A more democratic society, on the other hand, will generally emphasize the value of human equality. It has been explained, for example, that the high ethical sensitivities manifested in Jewish tradition are ultimately traceable to the fact that, throughout the major periods of their history, the Jews were constantly under pressure from imperialist neighbors or the dominant majorities in whose midst they lived. An oppressed group will always develop an ethic that emphasizes justice and freedom.

Even in the conception of God, different social groups will leave the imprint of their respective group experiences. People who earn their living by tilling the soil will naturally think of God as that aspect of reality which grants them a fertile soil and abundant crops. They may personalize their conception of God into very crude terms, but whatever the conception, it represents the recognition that the universe supports the quest for what is to them the highest group value. The Jews thought of God as the great Liberator because the memory of the deliverance from Egypt was so profoundly fixed in their group consciousness. Through it they came to the recognition that the nature of things cooperates with man's struggle for freedom and will eventually help him to destroy tyranny.

It is, however, in the field of ritual that variations in group experience prove their greatest importance in religious differentiation. Ritual, we found, is essentially a symbolic act affirming the values of a society and drawn from the context of the social experience in which those values were achieved. The uniqueness of form which all group experience inevitably take on creates a corresponding uniqueness in the ritual of the various social groups. The Jew, for example, expresses his affirmations of freedom through a ritual built around the moments, objects, places and persons that figured prominently in his emancipation from Egyptian bondage. The Hindu may achieve the same objective through a ritual that he will construct around his struggle under Gandhi's leadership against the British Empire. Jew and Christian may reach a level of common social ideals. They may even come to think of God in essentially similar terms. But they will be differentiated by the unique group traditions in which their respective religious rituals are imbedded. What differentiates people religiously is, in other words, what differentiates them in every other area of culture — variations in group destiny, uniqueness in historic experience.

The dynamics of social experience are, however, responsible not only for whatever uniqueness there is in the varying religious traditions. They are also responsible for the phenomena of religious change in a particular tradition. Any change in man's social and economic environment will ultimately produce pressure for change in social ideals and world outlook, or, in religious expression. Thus the immersion of Jews in an industrialized society with its rising standards of women's rights has resulted in the demand for the introduction of mixed pews in the synagogue. The development of the late Friday evening service into the most important sabbath service in many Jewish congregations is directly the result of economic conditions which have forced most Jews to work on Saturdays.

Men of small stature may confuse the process of religion with its products, and, in loyalty to the religious expressions of a particular time, resist the fruits of new religious creativity. But unless religion is to degenerate into irrelevance, change must finally prevail. Religion, in other words, is not static, but dynamic. It grows and develops; but development in religion, as in every other frontier of man's spiritual life, is achieved only through the dialectic of struggle.

Religion, we found, is a three-fold phenomenon. It begins with the assertion of moral values; it reaches out for an interpretation of the universe that gives these values efficacy and support; and it culminates in a technique by which these values are enacted as dramatic and emotional experiences. Individually, one or another of these aspects of religion are also present in other pursuits of life. Religion alone, however, synthesizes them all into a coherent and organic whole. Let the liberal but study the logic of his own being and the implications of his own ideals and he will find that religion is an inevitable expression of human nature at its best and that as such it must be of vital concern to him as to all mankind.

Ends and Means

By NATHAN A. BARACK*

ALMOST every major crisis in human history has caused the leading thinkers of the age to reformulate their philosophical concepts and ethical values. The present world debacle has had a similar effect. It has led the brilliant English novelist, Aldous Huxley, to discard his once espoused philosophy of meaninglessness in favor of a 1937 blend of Christian-Hindu mysticism.

The author of "Ends and Means"** explains what had motivated him originally to subscribe to the 'mechanomorphic' cosmology of modern science and why he is impelled now to reject it. He accepted the outlook that the universe is a "great machine pointlessly grinding its way toward ultimate stagnation and death," writes Huxley, in order to liberate himself simultaneously from an unjust social system and from a stringent morality. Christian theologians justified both by pointing to their significant positions in a universe of meaning. Huxley, therefore, like most of his contemporaries who wished to free themselves from the hated economic and moral systems, proceeded to deny all meaning to the universe. But, continues the writer of "Ends and Means", the human mind soon tires of viewing life as aimless. Unable to find meaning in the universe as a whole, there were those who sought and discovered it in limited spheres: in the deified nation and class. As a corollary to the communist and fascist creeds they embraced the dogma that the end justifies the means.

What are the consequences of the wide acceptance of the totalitarian "idolatries"? inquires Huxley. A world engaged in a mad rearmament race on the brink of war and universal chaos!

The road chosen by the dictators and their followers, concludes the author, evidently does not lead to the era of justice and peace. If man is to attain the Golden Age, to which he has looked forward during the past thirty centuries, non-attachment to the material things of life (always associated by the founders of religion with attachment to a spiritual reality "greater and more significant than the self") will have to become the prevailing ethic.

Nevertheless, non-attachment becomes difficult or impossible for most people at a point considerably below £5000. The society of non-attached human beings cannot be brought about by violent methods. For means determine ends. Peace and freedom cannot be effected through strife and enslavement. The economic and educational changes indispensable to the achievement of the ideal society must consequently be accomplished peaceably. Governments will not undertake these changes. Well-intentioned and intelligent individuals (of considerable means. "The fact is unfortunate.") should therefore band themselves into associations and

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**"Ends and Means," by Aldous Huxley, Harper and Bros., 1937.

establish working models of the ideal community. By means of a determined example in the face of likely persecution they will eventually usher in the co-operative society of "rational idealists."

In our brief review of Huxley's theory of "ends and means", reference to his elaborate discussions relative to government, war, economics, education, religion, and ethics has been omitted. Our primary concern here is with his doctrine of non-attachment and its implications. For we believe that, should the present world chaos continue, and especially if war should ensue, two undesirable philosophies are likely to gain a wide adherence. Disillusionment and the belief in the futility of human endeavor may overwhelm one class of people. A second group, in harmony with the doctrine of non-attachment even to "the best things that this world has to offer" (including art and science), may become devotees of passive resistance under *all* circumstances. They may even refuse to support any organized (and therefore effective) progressive movement for fear that it may lead to violence.

True, Huxley, the rational idealist, endeavors to prove that passive resistance is not only philosophically but pragmatically sound. Although he does not state so expressly, he was greatly influenced by Gandhi. And yet, he admits that Gandhi's non-cooperation movement had to be relinquished because it was on the verge of degenerating into civil war. But even if the movement had been successful, it would yet not prove conclusively Huxley's case for unconditional and universal pacifism. India is a vast country; it is distant from England. In these important respects it differs from Spain. How then can we concur with the author when he quotes Jessie Wallace Hughan to the effect that, in a pacifist Spanish republic, the present counter-revolution would never have arisen? Is it not rather far-fetched and dangerous to imply that, because scientific treatment in the insane asylum is much more efficacious than the old brutal methods, mad and formidable dictators at large could therefore be checked by means of passive resistance?

We wish we could agree with those who advocate *unconditional* pacifism. But unfortunately passive resistance practised on a large scale in a world of force defeats the very goal that inspires it. For brutality can be endured only for a brief period. Ultimately it either stultifies or hardens its victims, if it does not drive them to an extreme form of rebellion. It was in the land of Buddhism, which Huxley highly extolls, that the unspeakable caste system, with the class of untouchables, was tolerated. It was in a Christian Europe that heretics were burned because they were reluctant to accept a particular brand of the non-attachment creed. Huxley, indeed, attempts to extenuate the contradiction between the gospel of absolute non-violence and the acts of the medieval church. He says that the church leaders found justification for their policies in the "ferocious, bronze-age" theology of the Old Testament. Did Huxley forget that a cardinal tenet of the church was that the New Testament superseded the Old Testament? (Ironically enough, those who did follow staunchly the "ferocious, bronze-age" Old Testament willingly surrendered the "things of this world" for their beliefs.) Today, in an age of organized brutality and falsehood, mysticism as a technique for social betterment is even less acceptable than formerly.

Neomysticism need be rejected not only because it is inadequate as a social philosophy. It is also, because of its negation of life, an inadequate philosophy for the normal individual. Huxley states that man seeks meaning in life. It is because of this fact, because man cannot remain content with a meaningless life, that a positive religious philosophy, stressing the affirmation of life, is essential. For man's life becomes most meaningful when he attains harmonious self-realization. The higher the individual's potential self-expression and the more ample the opportunities for its realization, the profounder the meaning in his life. If a

person's expression is below his potential level, life soon grows tedious for him. And, as Huxley points out, external means are sought to fill the void in one's life.

The group and belief in a superpersonal Cause play an important role in personal self-expression. Social membership is not only a biological but an esthetic necessity. The wider the limits of the group of which one is an effective member, the deeper his self-expression. Likewise, regardless of the true nature of Reality that pervades our universe, man is in need of a Cause that he can understand and with which he can merge himself and his aims. Man is in subjective need of a Supreme Cause not only because he seeks support in his struggle for life. By identifying himself with a superpersonal Force the human being enriches and deepens his life. The higher the *subjective* Reality, the more meaningful the life.

The concepts of the idolatrous contemporary of Abraham were objectively erroneous. Subjectively, they were real. To one who believed in them sincerely, they afforded the highest media for self-expression possible under the circumstances. Monotheism and pantheism, of course, provide higher means to self-realization for one who is capable of comprehending them intellectually and emotionally. Thus, service to an ever-widening group and identification with some form of universal Reality are not only socially significant but also media for the greater self-expression of the individual. Attachment to an ultimate Reality is, consequently, not necessarily correlated with the negation of life. Man rather culminates his affirmation of life by attachment to a higher Cause.

We have tried to show that the employment of absolutely pacifistic methods in coping with those who are unscrupulous in their tactics is self-defeating. We have contended, moreover, that the non-attachment ideal is incompatible with the human striving for a positive, purposeful life. Huxley, however, rightfully spurns the totalitarian creeds with their ethically repugnant dogma that the end justifies the means. This dogma is not only socially pernicious but also fails to recognize the fact that the so-called *ends are means to facilitate and enrich the human life.* Destroy the value of the individual life and you destroy the basis of any cause.

Fortunately, although the totalitarian idolatries seem to be triumphant at present, there is no need for despair. Man has more than once been submerged by the forces of darkness. He has been submerged in days when the number of people capable of self-emancipation was smaller than today. And yet, because of the *characteristic constitution of the human mind and emotions,* there were always individuals who, by their courageous striving, kept alive the ideal of a just society. The number of such individuals is now sufficiently great to constitute at least a social force. Furthermore, the economic conditions conducive to the establishment of the just society are now potentially in existence. This is incalculably important. Lofty philosophies are futile under conditions that militate against their *possible* application. In an age of scarcity man was compelled to struggle for the basic human needs. The higher forms of self-expression could be attained only by the few. Not so now. Hence, despite the fact that the forces of reaction can now utilize their vast resources more systematically and thoroughly than in the past, eventual victory lies not with them.

The proper course, in a very imperfect world filled with clashing interests, is to oppose reaction by means most nearly compatible with the prophetic ideals. When the democratic cooperative society is finally achieved, man will be in a better position to appreciate the ideals of service to man and attachment to God as the road to human happiness.

Proceedings of the Reconstructionist Summer Institute

(Continued from last issue)

The sessions on Sunday were devoted to a study of Jewish Community Organization. Rabbi Eugene Kohn, who presided at the morning session, introduced the subject in these words:

"In the course of our discussion yesterday, the name 'Reconstructionist' was criticized, because it seemed to imply that Judaism was an artificial structure rather than an organic growth. As a criticism of the name, this has validity. We must conceive of Judaism in organic terms. And if the Jewish people as a whole had continued so to conceive it, no reconstruction of Jewish life would be necessary. But ever since the so-called Emancipation, that organic conception has been lost, and it is precisely because so large a proportion of the Jewish people has failed to recognize the true nature of Judaism that a reconstruction, a reorganization of the whole structure of Jewish life becomes necessary. Those of you who are familiar with our Reconstructionist point of view know that we sum it up in the statement that Judaism is a religious civilization.

"Starting out with this premise, there are certain inevitable conclusions that we come to. One of these conclusions is Zionism. We want in Palestine, the one land to which we have any historic claim, to establish a full and complete community life, one in which Jews can control the economic, social and cultural conditions under which they live. But if Judaism is to continue to function as a civilization, some provision has to be made also for some form of community life, for the Jews who do not live in Palestine. We therefore have a problem as to how we can provide that sort of social structure for Jewish life in America which will enable all aspects of that life to flourish.

This morning, we are to listen to two very important papers that will, I believe, put the problem into perspective for us. In the first place, Mr. Duker is going to give us a sort of a survey of social conditions of Jewish life in America in a historic setting. We are then going to hear a paper from Mr. Shetzer, who is President of the Jewish Community Council of Detroit, on the needs of the Jewish Community."

Mr. Duker was then called upon to present his paper on "The Trend Toward Jewish Community Organization in America."* This paper was a thorough discussion of sociological trends in American Jewish life from its inception to the present day. He particulaly stressed the epochal changes that have taken place since the restriction of immigration to America created both the opportunity and the necessity for the emergence of new forms of Jewish life appropriate to American conditions. The shibboleths of the party divisions and ideologies brought from Europe by the various religious, nationalistic and economic groups, tend in the American environment to lose their meaning. New problems irrelevant to their programs demand common action by Jews. The result is a strong tendency toward Jewish community organization, particularly in cities of middle size, whose Jewish population is small enough to feel the pressure of the American environment, and large and diverse enough to require the establishment of new methods of social and cultural collaboration among Jews.

Mr. Shetzer then read his paper; which dealt both with the underlying philosophy of Jewish community organization and the practical problems involved. He gave a detailed and highly instructive account of the procedure by which the Detroit Jewish Community Council was organized, and the problems with which it has coped with conspicuous success, even in the short time of its existence.

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* To be published in a forthcoming issue.

(To be continued)